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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/15): COMPLAINTS OF "NEVER
ENDING" ARAB SUMMITS

Main Stories:

All papers lead with news that the estimated Palestinian death toll from the "aggression" on Gaza has reached 1,035 killed and 4,850 injured. The January 14 death toll is reported as 48, of whom 29 were children, nine, women and five, elderly Palestinians. Al Quds' and Al Ayyam's front pages report that Palestinian militants injured 17 Israeli soldiers in fierce battles on January 14. The militants used mortars against Israeli army troops supported by air and tank power, causing the Israeli forces to fail in their advance on Gaza City, according to all front pages. In lead photo coverage, Al Quds' caption shows, "Northern Gaza Strip: Smoke rises from site being shelled by Israeli army," while Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida run a photo encaptioned, "residents inspect [extensive] destruction caused by Israeli aerial shelling on houses in Sheikh Rodwan [Gaza City] neighborhood..."

In US-related coverage, Al Quds and Al Ayyam front page quotes by White House spokesperson Perino expressing skepticism during her January 14 press briefing, over reports that Hamas has accepted Egypt's ceasefire initiative. In addition, Al Ayyam's front page cites AFP in quoting an "anonymous" State Department official, stating on January 14 that Hamas has yet to meet ceasefire conditions, without elaborating further on the specific conditions.

All front pages devote detailed coverage to Gaza ceasefire efforts, highlighting Hamas' acceptance, with "comments," of the Egyptian ceasefire proposal. The papers quote Egyptian sources in revealing that Hamas' positive response will be conveyed to Israel through Israel's Defense Ministry envoy Gilad, who will be visiting Egypt on January 15. Meanwhile, Al Ayyam's front page adds that Israel has rejected a Hamas proposal for a limited one-week ceasefire, on the

grounds that it does not want Hamas to rearm. The paper also cites Israeli daily Haaretz in reporting that for the first time, since the beginning of Israel's recent military operations in Gaza, Israeli Army commanders are "demanding a halt to the offensive." Finally, Al Quds' front page cites AFP in quoting Jordanian King Abdullah on January 14 calling on the international community to prioritize a ceasefire in Gaza, while Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan is quoted on an inside page telling his Israeli counterpart Livni, "you can come to Turkey only if you want to discuss a ceasefire."

In official Palestinian reaction, all front pages quote Palestinian President Abbas stating that the current priority is to halt "aggression" on the Gaza Strip and end the suffering of Palestinians there, "by any means possible." Abbas made his statement in a January 14 Ramallah meeting with visiting Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos. Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad is also quoted from meetings with Moratinos on Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page. Fayyad condemned the "aggression" on Gaza and demanded an immediate halt to Israeli military operations there.

News of "never ending" summit calls to discuss the situation in Gaza, including Saudi Arabia's call for an urgent summit for Gulf states to be held on January 15, is front page news in all papers. The papers also note that the planned Doha summit for January 14, called to discuss Gaza, has been cancelled since the minimum number of states did not commit to attending. Al Ayyam's front page cites AFP in quoting Qatar's Emir renewing invitations to the summit and noting that Qatar will not invite Palestinian factions.

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In coverage of international efforts and statements, Al Ayyam's front page reports that the UN General Assembly will hold a special session on Gaza on January 15. Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page cites Reuters in quoting International Court of Justice officials stating that they do not have the expertise to investigate war crimes in Gaza. Al Quds front pages January 14 comments by Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov expressing, "deep concerns over the increased number of victims" and calling for immediate implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1860. Finally, Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front pages report that Bolivia has severed relations with Israel in protest of Israel's military operations in Gaza.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds editorial is titled, "Controversy over the summit...and vague stands on the Egyptian initiative" (01/15) "We don't believe that those accepting to attend the [Doha] summit are more interested in the Palestinian cause than those refusing [to attend]...the Arabs already proposed at two important summits, a peace initiative that no one cares about... We reject the use of our cause, a common cause among Arabs, as fuel for divisions and [special]interests... if someone needs an example [of how to sever relations with Israel], they have Venezuela and Bolivia. They don't need a summit or collective decision."

2) "Abdul Majid Swaylim opines in Al Ayyam under the title "Features of a possible solution in Gaza" (01/15): "[Israel] has replaced talk of a permanent truce with talk of permanent arrangements. A halt to rocket fire... [seems inevitable], within the framework of a ceasefire, as does... [the implementation of] a long term or permanent comprehensive deal..."

WALLES